



# FOCAL Points~~



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**FRIENDS OF CHILDREN AND LITERATURE -- CENTRAL LIBRARY**

## **10<sup>th</sup> Annual Science Day a Rousing Success!** **by Linda Israelson, Children's Literature**

This year's landmark 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Science Day took place at Central Library on the afternoon of Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Approximately 600 people converged in the hallways and courtyards adjoining the Taper Auditorium for an extended three-hour event featuring more activities than ever!

Sponsored by FOCAL, Science Day was originally conceived as a commemoration for Merv Miller, physics and chemistry instructor at Harvard School (now Harvard Westlake) in North Hollywood for forty years, and husband of founding FOCAL member, Peggy Miller. When Peggy passed away during the initial planning stages, the innovative family-focused celebration became a tribute to them both. Their daughter, Nancy Reich, warmly welcomes attendees each year in their honor at what has become a highly anticipated festival of curiosity and learning.

Months of planning brought together a team of FOCAL members, library staff, special guests and eager volunteers to make it all possible. Headlining the extravaganza was Mad Science of Los Angeles with their entertaining, interactive presentation about principles of air pressure called "Up, Up, and Away!" Full Spectrum Educational Services was also on hand to show off a variety of desert and rain forest critters in their presentation of "Wild Things and Animals of Prey". Other participants included the L.A. Makerspace organization sharing ways to automatize Lego brick creations using Arduino remote control technology, and the Cybercode Twins (local tech celebrities America and Penelope Lopez) who shared the wonders of virtual reality through various viewing devices.



Rory Fisher and Minh Ly of LAPL's Information Technologies Division demonstrated the library's amazing 3-D printer, one of the first things attendees encountered upon arrival. Amanda Charles of the Science Department promoted the library's varied electronic resources at the "Tech Tryout Cart". Also representing the Science Department were Stella Mittelbach, who engaged kids with a game about toy inventions, and Andrea Borchert, sharing her inviting and attractive "wave machine" made of tape, wooden skewers and gummi bears! Diane Olivo-Posner from Youth Services, Christina Young from Adult Services, and Rita Law, Children's Librarian at the Arroyo Seco Branch, helped out with a variety of tasks including crowd control at the popular photo booth and the completion of patron surveys.

Representing the Children's Literature Department, Joanna Fabicon showed kids how they could use a simple electronic invention kit called Makey Makey to allow control of a computer via unconventional objects such as celery, bell peppers, or their own creations. Brooke Sheets demonstrated tiny, programmable robots called "ozobots". Mara Alpert introduced the Mad Science programs and trained volunteers at the ever-popular "exploding chemical volcanoes!" station. Linda Israelson checked in volunteers and answered general information questions. Madeline Bryant supervised the goings-on, and was instrumental in planning and in procuring the snazzy white lab coats proudly worn by staff, FOCAL members, and teen volunteers.



Other interactive topics at the courtyard tables included rocks, color & light, fingerprints, and science-themed crafts. Additional amusement was provided by a toddler preschool zone and our fantastic STAR volunteer reader, Kate Stifter, with her supply of stories and science-themed coloring sheets. Talented face painter, Carmen MacDonald, provided another fun way for kids to get into the spirit of the day. Local photographer legend, Gary Leonard was on site to document the festivities, while Louisa Gauerke, clerk typist in Children's Literature, took additional photos.

Encouraged to visit the Children's Literature Department, families flocked to the second floor with requests for books about gravity, volcanoes and other scientific subjects. Substitute librarians, Judy Donovan and Letty Terrones handled the crowds with grace and fortitude, assisted by the awesome CH clerical staff!

During breaks throughout the afternoon, volunteers and staff alike enjoyed a wide and plentiful variety of savory snacks and sweet delicacies, compliments of FOCAL and the Children's Literature staff. Credit and thanks go to the event attendants who provided the set-up, to Russell Pyle, resident audio-visual expert, and to all the FOCAL members who made this event such a grand success, especially

those who put in so much work on the day of the event: Caroline Gill, Renny Day, Helene Mochedlover, Lara Clardy, Kathryn Wilcox, Lauren Okayama, Marilyn Robertson, and Stephanie Moore.

Thanks also to Theresa Webster of Teen'Scape for sending us enthusiastic teen volunteers, and to Amber Angel and the fantastic team of volunteers recruited from Valley College. It couldn't have happened without them!

Kudos to our crew of photographers: Louisa Gauerke, Gary Leonard, and Diane Olivo-Posner.

**Plans are already underway for next year's Science Day! It's already on the books for April 29, 2017 from 1 to 4 p.m. Mark your calendars!**





## ONWARD AND UPWARD

by Madeline Bryant

Working in the Children's Literature Department at LAPL is a little bit like working at an amusement park. Families come in droves from all over Los Angeles, the country, and even the world to experience this majestic place. I have had visitors tell me that it reminds them of an "old-school library", of church, of Hogwarts, that it's their last-stop "must see" place on the way to the airport, that they work in a library halfway across the world *but it doesn't look like this*. "Not many do", I reply. Some take tours and ask questions, some stay and chat and some simply stroll through speechless and in awe. The most beautiful time of day, by the way, is mid-afternoon on a sunny day when filtered sunlight streams through the shades, dapples the patterned carpet, and illuminates the earth-toned murals in all their glory. Almost daily, someone looks at me with envy and says "this must be a wonderful place to work!" I respond honestly and with a smile. Yes, it is. And I silently thank them for reminding me how lucky I am. This is what I will miss most about working in what is one of the best public spaces in Los Angeles.

Last week, I was promoted to Coordinator of Youth Services for the Los Angeles Public Library, a job I am starting with great excitement and nervous anticipation. I have been the manager in Children's Literature for over 10 years (arriving three years before that as the Librarian III) and this will be my final Quarterly Narrative Report as a Senior Librarian. I could tell you about the Midwinter Conference I attended in Boston (fun!) or how many storytimes I did and how many came (lots!). I can tell you about the trainings I conducted (brilliant new Children's Librarians! Yay!), the trainings I endured (ADA, the Grievance Process. Somewhat less yay!) or the meetings I held or attended (staff, department, planning, summer reading) or how many interview panels for which I was a rater (several!). But that won't really capture the essence of what the job entails because just like a roller coaster, unless you've ridden one yourself, the exhilaration of the ups and downs and the wind in your hair, you can't really know what it feels like to ride one. And my experience will be different from anyone else's.

What I *will* tell you is that it has been a wonderful ride, during which I worked with the most hard-working, intelligent and dedicated teams of people. The Children's Literature workroom is a hub of conversation, collaboration, reading aloud, laughter and the occasional shriek or animal noise coming from storytime practice. It's unlike any other! It's lively and fun! During my tenure here, I implemented much-needed systematic weeding projects, including that of the long-neglected, impacted closed stacks. Most notably, several years ago we inherited the order sheet process from Children's Services and learned new collection development skills, putting into practice our already in-depth reference knowledge with refining and building the system's collection to make it even better. We watched the downtown community change over the years and thus we developed programs and activities for new audiences, young families and babies in particular, with great success. We experimented with different spaces for storytime and incorporated digital media and STEAM (Science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) into our class visits and programs for the first time. And most

recently, we began “genre-fying” the picture book room to improve ease of access to materials for both librarians and the public. It is my hope that this project and others will continue.

It is not without a hint of sadness and sentimentality that I embark on this new venture but I am eager for the changes and challenges ahead. I hope to contribute in a meaningful way to creating an even better LAPL in my new capacity. Someday, years from now, I will walk back into this gorgeous glowing room and say to the librarian at the desk “this must be an amazing place to work”. And hopefully, he or she will smile, take a moment to reflect, and respond with an honest and resounding “yes, it is.”

## EDITORS' NOTES

Congratulations to Brooke Sheets, Senior Librarian in Children’s Literature, and to Joanna Fabicon, Senior Children’s Librarian in the Engagement and Learning Division. Madeline Bryant’s new title is Associate Director, Youth Services Department, in the EAL Division. Both she and Diane Olivo-Posner are now Principal Librarians in this new Division, of which Eva Mitnick is the new Division Librarian. Diane’s new title is Associate Director, Exploration and Creativity. In our Spring issue we interviewed Eva and learned all about the new division from her.

Kudos to Mara Alpert, who has been elected to the 2018 John Newbery Medal Committee. Madeline has been elected to the 2018 Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal Committee.

**Another Save the Date:** Saturday, October 1, 2016, for FOCAL-sponsored History Day, which we hope will be an annual event, like Science Day. This year’s focus is on California Stories, and promises to be a fun-filled, educational afternoon.



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Selena Terrazas, Department Manager  
Brooke Sheets, Senior Librarian, Children's Literature  
Helene Mochedlover, FOCAL Points Editor

FOCAL  
Children's Literature Department  
Los Angeles Public Library  
630 West Fifth Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90071

